

SOUTH CAROLINA NUCLEAR ADVISORY COUNCIL

NUCLEAR ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

October 18, 2001, 10:00 AM

Training Center

V.C. Summer Nuclear Station

Jenkinsville, South Carolina

The third meeting of the SC Nuclear Advisory Council was held on Thursday, October 18, 2001, at 10:00 AM, in the Training Center at the V.C. Summer Nuclear Station in Jenkinsville, South Carolina. Dr. John Stucker, Chairman, welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked all Council members and staff to introduce themselves to the audience. Dr. Stucker spoke briefly about the composition of the Council and which organizations were represented. He then asked for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Mr. Ben Rusche made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Mr. Steve Byrne and unanimously approved.

Dr. Stucker then asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting of July 18, 2001. Dr. Carolyn Hudson made the motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ben Rusche and unanimously approved.

Chairman Stucker then discussed activities of the Council since the last meeting at the Savannah River Site. The Council wrote to Governor Hodges recommending that he write to Secretary Abraham and ask that DOE postpone plans for shipping plutonium to SRS until the programs and facilities for plutonium disposition were funded and in place. The Council also wrote to Governor Hodges recommending that he write to Secretary Abraham and ask that he recommend to President Bush that the Yucca Mountain site in Nevada be developed as a high-level waste repository. The Council also wrote to the Governor regarding the NGA Task Force and the issue of uranium in the groundwater in Simpsonville, South Carolina. The Governor did send these letters as recommended by the Council. All of this correspondence is available on the Nuclear Advisory Council website.

Chairman Stucker stated that the focus of today's meeting would be nuclear power, and he thanked Mr. Steve Byrne and his staff for arranging the meeting logistics for the day. He noted that the Council had assembled a panel which would explore many issues related to nuclear power generation in SC. He then introduced Mr. Steve Byrne, who began the presentations. Mr. Byrne gave a brief overview of the V.C. Summer Station and its mission.

Mr. Michael Tuckman, Executive Vice President for Duke Energy, Mr. Steve Byrne from SCANA, and Mr. Joe Donahue from CP&L gave presentations on how spent fuel is stored at the Oconee, V.C. Summer, and Robinson nuclear plants. Following a discussion of the shortage of on-site storage capacity at the Robinson plant, Mr. Tuckman urged the Council to pressure the Department of Energy to build the Yucca Mountain High-Level Waste Repository in Nevada. Senator Ryberg asked each of the presenters if the utilities they represented were planning to

build any new power plants. Mr. Bill McCall from Santee Cooper said that they are planning an additional plant. Mr. Byrne said that there are smaller plants that are being planned throughout the state. Senator Ryberg stated that he is concerned about the rising cost of natural gas and the fact that the utilities seem to be placing all their emphasis on gas-fired plants. He hopes that someone is taking a look at the total natural gas consumption and reserves.

Mr. Mike Tuckman gave a presentation on the license renewal process for nuclear power plants. He stated that all the utilities operating nuclear plants in South Carolina have already sought NRC approval for a 20 year license extension, or are planning to do so.

Mr. Marv Fertel, Senior Vice President of the Nuclear Energy Institute spoke about the status of the Yucca Mountain Project and related litigation. He said that right now there is 43,000 metric tons of heavy metal commercial used fuel stored at 73 operating plant sites around the United States. He then provided an overview of the issues surrounding the construction of the Yucca Mountain High-Level Waste Repository. Mr. Fertel estimates that the earliest that Yucca Mountain will open is the year 2010. By then there will be 55 sites and 71 units requiring storage space for their spent fuel. At this point, DOE is soliciting public comment on the preliminary site suitability study (the Governor sent a letter in October regarding this matter), and in December Secretary Abraham will make his recommendations on site suitability to the President. Mr. Fertel emphasized that "suitability" doesn't mean that construction can start, but rather that it is appropriate to file a license application with the NRC. He also noted that Nevada has 30 days to write to the Secretary to give him their final opinion before he makes his recommendation to the President, but in Mr. Fertel's opinion, the Secretary will recommend that they proceed with the licensing application process. Mr. Fertel stated that it will possibly be the end of January before the President makes his recommendation to proceed with the licensing process and if he decides in favor of licensing, the State of Nevada has 60 days to disapprove of this action, which they probably will. He said that after this 60 day period, Congress, by a simple majority could vote to override the State of Nevada's disapproval. He emphasized that if the Congress does not override the disapproval, the waste will stay in the states for at least 50 more years because the whole process starts over again. Mr. Fertel feels that the vote will come out in favor of proceeding with the licensing application for Yucca Mountain. In summary, he stated that even if Yucca Mountain receives an NRC license, waste would stay in the states until at least the end of this decade. Detailed discussion and questions followed regarding the purpose and current status of the DOE waste fund.

Dr. Mary Kelly, Associate Director representing the League of Women Voters, provided the Council with a brief overview of the League's involvement with nuclear issues. She also asked the Council to consider the League's concerns regarding problems associated with plutonium and the MOX fuel fabrication project.

Mr. Louis Zeller, representing the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, stated that South Carolina has much to lose if the Yucca Mountain facility is licensed. In his opinion, the dangers associated with transporting nuclear waste across the United States make the geologic repository a poor choice for waste disposal.

Mr. Fred Hume, Director of the Economic Development Partnership that represents Edgefield and Aiken counties, spoke in favor of Savannah River Site and its impact on economic development. Mr. Hume stated that South Carolina needs to encourage new activities at the site, including: new technologies for generators and advanced reactors, production of isotopes with an accelerator, a university reactor, and an energy park at the site.

Mr. Henry Porter from DHEC said that South Carolina is one of 32 NRC agreement states. Under that agreement SC can regulate certain types of radioactive materials that are in the state. There are about 335 facilities in the state that have specific licenses for radioactive material. Mr. Porter said that many of the licenses the state issues are for hospitals, universities and industrial uses of radioactive material. He said that DHEC does have authority in the area of transporting radioactive waste materials. DHEC has the authority to inspect the shipments of radioactive waste, and this includes spent fuel shipments. DHEC is also involved in emergency response planning.

Mr. Randy Watts, representing the Public Service Commission, was also present. The PSC regulates the business side of the nuclear power industry in SC.

After the last panel presentation, Chairman Stucker then highlighted four areas that the Council needs to track. These include nuclear plant license renewal, funding an7yepd other issues related to the MOX program at SRS, spent fuel disposition, and the energy park concept outlined by Mr. Hume. He suggested that spent fuel and high level waste disposal should be the primary agenda item at the next quarterly meeting. Senator Ryberg asked that the Council give careful consideration to the energy park concept and requested that it be on the agenda for the next meeting.

Chairman Stucker noted that the Council was told when it was organized last spring that the Budget & Control Board planned to issue an RFP for a study of the Barnwell extended care fund, and that the Council would perform a peer review of the study. Ms. Patricia Tangney then briefed the Council on the study. She stated that Bradburne, Briller and Johnson were awarded the contract to perform the study. It will be reviewed first by the Budget & Control Board Radioactive Waste Disposal Program, and then by the full Council. She proposed that the Council meet on the afternoon of November 15, 2001, to hear a presentation by BB&J. After that presentation, the Council would have two weeks to review the draft and provide comments to the Chairman. A detailed discussion regarding this study and the timetable for review followed this suggestion. Senator Ryberg and Dr. Navratil stated that they would prefer to receive a copy of the study for review prior to a presentation from the contractor. The Council decided to receive a copy of the study on November 15, 2001, and then meet on December 6, 2001, to discuss their findings with the contractor. The meeting will be held the afternoon of December 6 in the Gressette Building. The room will be announced.

The next quarterly meeting will be held on Thursday, January 17, 2002. This meeting will be held in Columbia at 1:00 PM. The meeting logistics will be finalized during the interim. The Council will re-visit Yucca Mountain and the spent fuel issue, in addition to the discussion on energy parks.

Senator Ryberg made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Dr. Carolyn Hudson and unanimously approved. The Council adjourned at 12:15 pm.